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HAVE A DRINK!

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THANKS!



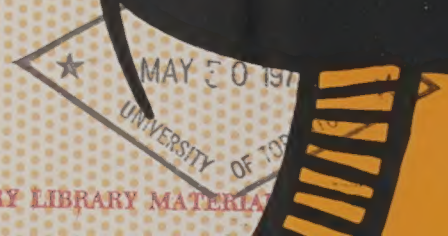
Ontario

Ministry of
Health

Hon. Frank S. Miller, Minister

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WHAT YOU DO DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Here in Ontario, we have “more” of just about everything. More people; more schools; more students. We also have more young drinkers than any other province in Canada. Most students in their 5th year of secondary school have used, or do use, alcoholic beverages.

Regular drinking affects health, negatively. And that’s where we come in, at the Ontario Ministry of Health. The Ministry is concerned about the increasing use of alcohol, not only among young people, but by the general population as a whole.

Because alcohol consumption is climbing every year, we have, in Ontario, what might be called a “problem.” We don’t want to tell you that you should never take a drink. But we do have a job to do. Our job is to promote *healthier* drinking patterns...by recommending healthy and wise limits to the use of alcohol.

We sat down with groups of students and talked with them about the use of alcohol in secondary schools and, in some instances, in lower grades. And we came up with some interesting opinions, attitudes and feelings that strengthened our beliefs about the effect the individual has on others.

Students, as a rule, have little respect for people who make it a regular habit to drink too much. They told us that their reactions on seeing a friend who is drunk range from thinking the person was “pretty dumb,” to feeling just plain disgusted. And if the person is a really close friend, they feel genuine *concern* about the damage they’re doing – real mental or physical harm.

We also found out that nothing we could say would “sell” someone off the idea of drinking. Students are invariably going to make their own decisions as to whether to try drinking or not. Whether they use alcohol to excess is another matter – and by far the strongest influence, for or against, is the person’s peer group.

Here’s where the core of our message comes through loud and clear: just as other people – friends, parents, teachers, etc. – affect you, *you* have an effect on others. Many people feel that as individuals, they don’t make much of an impression; they haven’t much influence – that their actions don’t make much difference, one way or the other.

That simply isn’t true. What you *do* matter, a lot. Your actions, your attitudes, your feelings, your reactions – affect others. Even more than you may realize.

Suppose you’re in a social situation where there is liquor or beer. Someone you know offers you a drink. Everyone is there to have a good time, but you don’t drink and you really don’t want that drink.

Should you take it anyway – just to be sociable? Should you “fake it?” Should you force yourself to drink it, for fear of being teased? Suppose you say “no thanks.”

It isn’t easy to do, but it’s surprising the effect the word “no” can have. And it’s amazing the impression you can make.

Your real friends who know you well enough will understand why you say “no.” Drinking just isn’t “you.” They may decide to follow your example. And to those who aren’t your real friends, your reasons don’t matter anyway.

You matter. And no one can make you be anything you don’t want to be.

Listen to the real you.

It’s worth a lot more to drink a bit less.